



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Grand Teton  
National Park

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
August 13, 2007 07-62

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## Grand Teton National Park News Release

### **Craig Thomas Discovery and Visitor Center Dedicated by Grand Teton National Park**

Superintendent Mary Gibson Scott and the staff of Grand Teton National Park hosted nearly 800 people at an outdoor dedication ceremony on Saturday, August 11, 2007, to officially open the new Craig Thomas Discovery and Visitor Center in Moose, Wyoming. Vice President of the United States Dick Cheney, Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne, National Park Service Director Mary Bomar, and Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY) served as honored guest speakers to address those gathered for the grand opening event.

Each of the esteemed guest speakers offered words of praise and congratulations to the park's partners—the Grand Teton National Park Foundation and the Grand Teton Association—and their boards of directors and generous donors who helped make this public-private partnership effort such a success. The venerated speakers also each acknowledged the public service and unwavering support provided to the National Park Service (NPS) by the late Senator Craig Thomas (R-WY) for whom the center is named. Throughout his political career, Senator Thomas was a strong advocate for national parks in general and Grand Teton National Park in particular. Thomas not only secured the federal funding for this new visitor facility, he also consistently supported many other critical national park programs and projects across America.

As a token of appreciation on behalf of the NPS, Director Bomar bestowed a special gift—a ranger flat hat—to Susan Thomas, Craig Thomas' wife. While presenting the gift to Mrs. Thomas, Director Bomar stated, "This iconic symbol of the National Park Service stands for the customs, beliefs and values that govern this agency; and it stands for our commitment to preserving natural and cultural resources. The ranger hat also embodies the steadfastness, loyalty, and strong sense of tradition that are so important to the National Park Service. These are qualities that Senator Thomas also held dear." Mrs. Thomas then took the stage to thank everyone for the love and support that she and her family have received since the untimely passing of her husband.

Secretary Kempthorne noted that, "We built this center as a community. In fact, more than half of the cost of the center—over \$10 million—was donated by the Grand Teton Association and Grand Teton National Park Foundation. These contributions represent the contributions of thousands of people who are members and supporters of these organizations." He further remarked, "As I toured this extraordinary building last night, it was hard not to think of the millions of people—particularly the millions of children—who will pass through these doors and have their breath taken away, their imagination kindled, and their hearts and minds filled with the wonder of Grand Teton National Park. I can imagine a young girl being inspired to become the next Rachel Carson. I can imagine a young boy being inspired to become the next John Muir or Aldo Leopold. This is more than a building project. It is labor of love. It is a gift to the American people."


Vice President Dick Cheney, keynote speaker for the dedication, praised Senator Thomas for his character, his integrity and his work ethic. Vice President Cheney also spoke of their many connections through their common Wyoming roots and their political careers. He stated that they both shared a deep love of Wyoming and its many natural wonders. He declared that it was entirely appropriate that the park's new visitor center bears the name of Senator Thomas because of his dedication and commitment to national parks across the nation. Vice President Cheney also commented that the new center will stand as a shining example of the great work that people can accomplish when they have a common goal.

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The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.



The 22,000 sq. ft. Craig Thomas Discovery and Visitor Center was built through a partnership project funded by the National Park Service, the Grand Teton National Park Foundation, and the Grand Teton Association. Its innovative architecture and interactive exhibits were designed to create a premiere facility to welcome visitors to Grand Teton National Park. The center will serve as a focal point to orient, educate and inspire visitors from near and far, and to encourage people to form personal connections to the natural world and to contemplate the power of philanthropy and stewardship for America's iconic treasures and national heritage.

Discussions about the prospect of a new visitor center began over twenty years ago. At that time, park managers and the Grand Teton Association (formerly the Grand Teton Natural History Association) began to strategize about adding an auditorium onto the Moose Visitor Center. To address concerns about inadequate conditions in the Moose Visitor Center with regard to over crowding, seismic stability of the building, and minimal space for interpretive exhibits, it soon became apparent that a new building—not just an auditorium— was needed.

Construction on the new visitor facility began in 2005 after a groundbreaking ceremony at which Senator Thomas served as the keynote speaker. The Grand Teton National Park Foundation then launched an ambitious capital finance campaign which has provided over 12 million dollars and counting to this project. The Grand Teton Association has contributed 1.5 million to this project, and will continue to provide financial support for the park's interpretive and scientific programs through income generated from their bookstore operations. Senator Thomas secured 8 million dollars in federal appropriations for this project.

The Craig Thomas Discovery and Visitor Center is the park's first new visitor center in the past 30 years; it is projected to serve the visiting public for the next 100 year—a world class visitor center for one of the nation's most beloved national parks.

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